

Brussels, Belgium - Palais d'Egmont

**"Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim
hatred in Europe"**

Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights

1-2 October 2015

Intervention by Sarah Isal, Chair, European Network Against Racism

Check Against Delivery

Thank you Jacki.

Dear Vice-President Timmermans,

Dear Commissioner Jourova,

Dear Ministers, Members of the European Parliament,

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the European Networks Against Racism, let me thank VP Timmermans and his team for organising this colloquium. This is a historic moment, for this is perhaps the first ever high-level Brussels based event, taking stock on antisemitism and islamophobia.

I would particularly like to thank Mette and Zaynab for their incredibly powerful testimonies. It takes a lot of courage to come to share your stories, to talk about the hatred you have faced, in front of all of us here today. Your voice, as women, also reminds us that women pay a heavy price for hatred violence. Your testimonies confirm that antisemitic and islamophobic attacks are not only the result of isolated actions by disturbed individuals but they also come as the **consequence of the lack of appropriate policies and in some cases as the result of bad policies. This is why ENAR, together with other civil society organisations, is calling for Member States to live up to their obligations on these issues.**

The spikes in anti-Semitic deadly attacks such as in Toulouse, Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen, and the increase in islamophobic violence across Europe have shed light on why Europe needs to act.

Antisemitism is deeply rooted in Europe's history of the last 2000 years, and has taken different and insidious forms over the centuries. Medieval Christian Antisemitism, discriminatory laws, scapegoating, racial antisemitism and the rise of conspiracy theories in the 19th century, all led to pogroms across Europe and, later, to the Holocaust. The specificity of the persecution of Jews and of the Holocaust is undeniable and unprecedented in Europe. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism is still ever present in our society. The 2014 war with Gaza has seen a rise in the numbers of anti-Semitic incidents against Jews. Increasing levels of terrorism perpetrated in the name of deviant political islamist ideologies in Western Europe have disproportionately targeted Jews as a specific community and have led to people being killed just for being Jewish. **Far-right movements are also responsible for the continuous anti-Semitic violence that we can see in Europe today.**

Far-right movements are also active perpetrators of **Islamophobia**. Demonstrations such as those organised by Pegida, or asylum and migration policies that are openly anti-Muslim have rapidly spread across Europe. They are a new expression of anti-Muslim sentiment, disguised as "anti-Islam" and grounded in far-right rhetoric. We have also seen Mosques being burnt to the ground such as in Sweden, graves being desecrated in France, Poland, Belgium, showing that more traditional anti-Muslim hatred is still alive and kicking.

Because public debates focus on Muslim women and the wearing of the headscarf, veiled women are reduced to their religious signs in the view of many and are thus becoming privileged targets of violence and discrimination. This means that pregnant women have been beaten in the streets just for wearing a veil. The heightened security context since the 9/11 events has contributed to experiences of discrimination by ethnic and religious minorities in Europe and Muslim communities in particular.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia are the products of different histories and ideologies and they cover diverse realities and types of manifestations which are sometimes common to both, sometimes specific to each. **This is why the response to antisemitism and islamophobia should deal with both common and separate factors.** They need to be addressed with equal attention and robustness, in order to avoid falling in the trap of an unhealthy and unproductive “victimisation competition”.

There are important gaps in the implementation of the EU Equality directives and the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia, and we will go into the details of these gaps tomorrow in panel discussions. While further efforts towards the enforcement of EU law is crucial, ENAR believes that Member States should also devise policy strategies that live up to EU standards. **We believe that the best way to achieve this, is by adopting specific strategies that should be measured by specific indicators, such as those that already exist for Roma inclusion, for all groups at risk of racial and religious discrimination, including Muslims and Jews.** These strategies should be developed and implemented with civil society and community representatives.

The National strategies that we are calling for should address the realities of people affected on the ground. And we feel that the European commission has an important role to play in ensuring that these strategies do 3 things: measure, respond and prevent antisemitism on the one hand, and islamophobia on the other.

1. Measure

Measuring is knowing. You will have seen the report published yesterday by the Fundamental Rights Agency highlighting the lack of data on anti-Semitism. **Equality data must be collected by Member States if we want to effectively combat anti-Semitism and islamophobia.** We call on the European Commission to issue a recommendation for Member States on the processing of equality data for the purposes of monitoring and implementing equal treatment.

2. Respond

Better responses to hate crime, hate speech and discrimination are a matter of urgency in all EU Member States. While EU provisions require the enactment of domestic legislation to prohibit racist and xenophobic violence there are currently no provisions to address discriminatory violence motivated by religion. This may lead to a lesser protection in some Member States, for antisemitic and islamophobic violence. EU legislation should be reviewed **to prohibit all forms of hate crime.**

In addition, many Member States fail to properly record and investigate hate crimes and to prosecute them as such. The European Commission must launch infringements proceedings in cases of systematic failure to protect victims.

Security policies are needed to respond to violent extremism, which we have seen has led to already so many deadly attacks. Security however has to take account of international human right standards and **refrain from discriminatory practices such as ethnic profiling.**

History has shown time and again that there is a connection between hate speech and hate crime. Hate speech creates a climate in which perpetrators of racist violence feel that the society around them condones their behavior. It is therefore imperative that hate speech be addressed, particularly when it comes from opinion leaders, such as the media and politicians. In some cases, and in the respect of international human rights law, they should even result in criminal proceedings.

3. Prevent

In order to prevent hate crime and discrimination, we need to look at the bigger picture, we need to rekindle the communities' trust in the society they live in. This implies increased participation of minorities in decision-making processes, it implies combatting structural discrimination, and it also needs **long-term social investment in employment, housing, health care and education.**

To prevent discrimination and violence, it is also crucial to challenge discriminatory laws and practices, in particular in the field of employment. Restrictions to wearing religious symbols imposed by employers are often not in line with international human rights standards. Ill-advised and intrusive general bans have been introduced in some Member States in the name of neutrality and secularism and have led to abusive attempts to extend restrictions on wearing religious symbols to the private sector. **The European Commission should ensure proper enforcement of the EU Employment Directive to challenge systemic restrictions to the right to wear religious symbols in national laws and practices.**

To conclude, I would like to insist on the fact that it is important to tackle these forms of racism and hatred - as well as anti-Gypsyism, anti-migrant racism and Afrophobia - jointly, to show that all forms of racism and **hatred are of concern to us all, to the whole of society and not just to Muslims and Jews**. Although we can feel overwhelmed by the rising levels of violence, hatred, intolerance, and the negative narrative that we have seen time and again recently, especially towards people seeking refuge in Europe, what we have also seen are incredible waves of solidarity, of generosity, and positive reactions to the current humanitarian crisis. We must capitalise on that, on the hundreds of thousand of people of all faiths and all origins, who marched in different European cities, with signs that read “refugees welcome”. People who feel that it is first and foremost a matter of human decency to speak about this issue in a respectful way, and not an inflammatory one, to be more welcoming, and to offer practical help and support to those in need. These are the values of Europe, values of tolerance, respect, freedom, which we must defend together. Now is the time for cooperation and alliance building to keep in mind the greater cause, beyond attempts by some to pit communities against one another. Civil society and community organisations, many of which are ENAR members, have come together in joint statement, and in their interventions throughout these two days are displaying great maturity and professionalism. We hope that Member States will demonstrate similar political maturity and leadership to address the issues at hand.

Thank you very much for your attention.



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ANTI-RACISM AND DIVERSITY INTERGROUP



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ANTI-RACISM & DIVERSITY INTERGROUP (ARDI) LAUNCH: **TOGETHER AGAINST RACISM**

ARDI CO-PRESIDENTS AND VICE-PRESIDENTS



FRANS TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President of the European Commission.

CLAUDE MORAES, Chair of the European Parliament Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee and founding member of ARDI



SARAH ISAL, Chair of European Network Against Racism board

... and **CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES**

Hosted by Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Soraya Post (S&D), Gerard Deprez (ALDE), Jean Lambert (GREENS/EFA), Massimo Castaldo (EFDD), Sajjad Karim (ECR) and Roberta Metsola (EPP)

JANUARY 26 2016 ▾ 11.00-13.00 ▾ ROOM:ASP5E2

- **VAIYA Alfiaz** <alfiaz.vaiya@europarl.europa.eu>

- Jan 8 at 10:50 PM

To

- J.P. Wittenboer

Message body

Hi,

I don't know what you mean?

Will you be attending?

Sent from my iPhone

On 08 Jan 2016, at 16:09, J.P. Wittenboer <ifudofhumanrights@yahoo.com> wrote:

Mierlo, 8 January 2016
Re: ARDI 26-January 2016
Room ASP5E2
European Parliament
Brussels

ANTI-RACISM

To: Mrs Saeah Isal

Dear Member,

I ask you for special attention on the ARDI meeting comming 26 th January 2016.

The youtube video "Depicted online as nazi" and special the links under this video to te internet.

video: [Depicted online as nazi](#)



Depicted online as nazi

View
on www.youtube.com

Preview by Yahoo

Sincerely,
IFUD of Human Rights
Mr. J.P. van den Wittenboer
chairman.

Make yourself at home.



This event will take place in the European Parliament in Brussels, on 26 January 2016 from 11.00 to 13:00, in Room ASP5E2. It is hosted by the ARDI co-Presidents and vice-Presidents.

Speakers will include Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission, Claude Moraes, Chair of the European Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, Sarah Isal, Chair of the European Network Against Racism, and other civil society representatives.

To register, send an email to alfiaz.vaiya@europarl.europa.eu